

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #1057/01 1381957
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 181957Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9156

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 001057

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA, PM, INL
STATE FOR INR/R/MR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [PTER](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - AMBASSADOR JOHN MAISTO, U.S.
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE OAS VISIT

¶1. Summary: PA arranged an on-the-record roundtable for U.S.
representative to the OAS, Ambassador John Maisto, with major local
dailies. All May 18 dailies ran coverage of the event, during

which Ambassador Maisto explained U.S. foreign policy for the region.
End Summary.

Headlines and excerpts:

¶2. Conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio"
(circ. 116,807): "OAS John Maisto: 'We want to Strengthen the OAS as
a Hemispheric Organization'"

Asked about the situation in Latin American, Ambassador Maisto said:
"To be democratically elected does not give a government permission
to ignore democracy on behalf of a project, a revolution, or history
and say 'now we are in command'... Our goal is to strengthen the
OAS as a hemispheric entity," he said, and underscored that the U.S.
wants to promote development and growth, but also "see that citizens
benefit with democracy and development not just in terms of income,
but also in terms of opportunities."

On Bolivia, Maisto said it is the responsibility of any elected
government to develop policies that lead to economic growth and
development, adding that countries that want to help Bolivia should
cooperate "but that cooperation must occur within the framework of
agreements and contracts and the parameters of globalization." He
underscored that the United States assists nations that show
progress in governance, in the fight against corruption, and that
invest in education and health and conduct "intelligent" reforms.
"We have been talking to Bolivia to see if they want to continue in
that direction," he concluded.

¶3. Conservative, independent daily "La Tercera" (circ. 102,000):
"Ambassador to the OAS: 'Washington Fears Authoritarian Turn in the
Region'"

U.S. ambassador to the OAS John Maisto said the greatest challenge
Latin America faces is avoiding that democratically elected
governments become authoritarian. He expressed confidence that the
OAS would be strengthened to help consolidate democracy in the
region. "To be democratically elected does not give a government
permission to ignore democracy.... We live in a continent in which
all governments, except for the beautiful island of Cuba, are
democratically elected and the greatest challenge is not just to be
democratic elected but to strengthen democratic institutions."

As to relations between Washington and President Hugo Chavez, Maisto
said, "The United States has always had the best relations with
Venezuela and will continue trying to have them." The U.S.
Department said last night that if Venezuela chooses to buy
Russian-made weapons, the U.S. would speak to Moscow about U.S.
concern over a possible arms race in Venezuela.

¶4. Government-owned, editorially independent "La Nacion" (circ.
3,800): "John Maisto: 'The U.S. Wants to Have the Best Relations
with Venezuela'"

Ambassador Maisto arrived in Santiago to promote "President Bush's relevant multilateralism campaign" that includes the Latin American region. Maisto said Latin America's greatest challenge is to ensure that democratically elected governments rule democratically. He added that the U.S. no longer labels governments as either "of the left or right because it does not make much sense." Maisto said everyone's nightmare is that democratically elected governments use democracy to become authoritarian governments."

With respect to President Bush's controversial immigration proposal, Maisto said, "We want to do two things: set the foundations for controlled, orderly, and humanitarian immigration; and carry out concrete actions to regulate the situation of illegal immigrants."

15. Liberal on line news service "El Mostrador": "John Maisto: 'To Talk Today about Governments of the Left or Right Makes no Sense'"

Amid growing conflicts in Iraq and Iran, an injured key ally such as Prime Minister Tony Blair, and with the European Community bathed in a dilemma akin to Hamlet's, and--worse yet, with the tale of the "leftist turn" in Latin America already included in the most serious political analysis--the task of a U.S. career diplomat facing the press is audacious and not without risk. That was the case with U.S. representative to the OAS, John Maisto, who met with the press invited by the U.S. embassy in Santiago.

"To speak today about governments of the left or right makes no sense. There can be good or bad governments," which is measured in terms of respect for democratic institutions. "It is not acceptable for governments to degrade democracy. Nations are committed to respecting the OAS democratic charter," he said.

As to investment and trade, Maisto emphasized that free countries with a strong democracy are always more attractive to the foreign investment that creates growth and generates jobs. "We must be

clear," he said, "the FTAA is the goal for the region.... It has been shown that trade under a free and democratic rule generates more employment."

Maisto concluded, "The goals are very clear: development and democracy under the best possible conditions. The role of multilateralism is key and the goal is the people. We believe the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund can and should work better."

16. El Mostrador article by columnist Juan Francisco Coloane:

"With his style and spontaneous cordiality, Maisto reflects what we could call the type of 'classic' U.S. diplomat we ran across decades ago...and not a fundamentalist of U.S. supremacy.

"Unquestionably it is politically correct to be anti-American in many sectors. But to lock oneself in the view that foreign policy must address the dilemma of containing the United States and its expansive nature could very well be the antithesis of realism and is a sure guide to failure. Hugo Chavez and Libyan Muammar Gadhafi have come to realize this: Chavez continues to assertively sell oil to the country he denigrates on a daily basis while Gadhafi now communicates the basic idea of 'live and let live.'

"There is a change of attitude on the part of the United States, or perhaps it is just the reflection that some communications elements were not adequately explaining the essence of U.S. foreign policy and its complexity in a general and non-fragmented way. Maybe what we are seeing today is a new type of pragmatism."

KELLY